

As the western world progresses with the liberal mindset and ideology becoming more prominent it is believed that discrimination is becoming non-existent including homophobia. With popular culture such as music and film becoming more LGBTQ inclusive it is easy to forget the realities that the LGBTQ community face in their day to day lives. In this poster presentation I will be considering the struggles the LBTQ community face in society due to fear, violence and acceptance of identity. I will be looking at Goffman to study identity and how negative stigma can affect a person and cause them to hide their identity or attributes of it, out of fear.

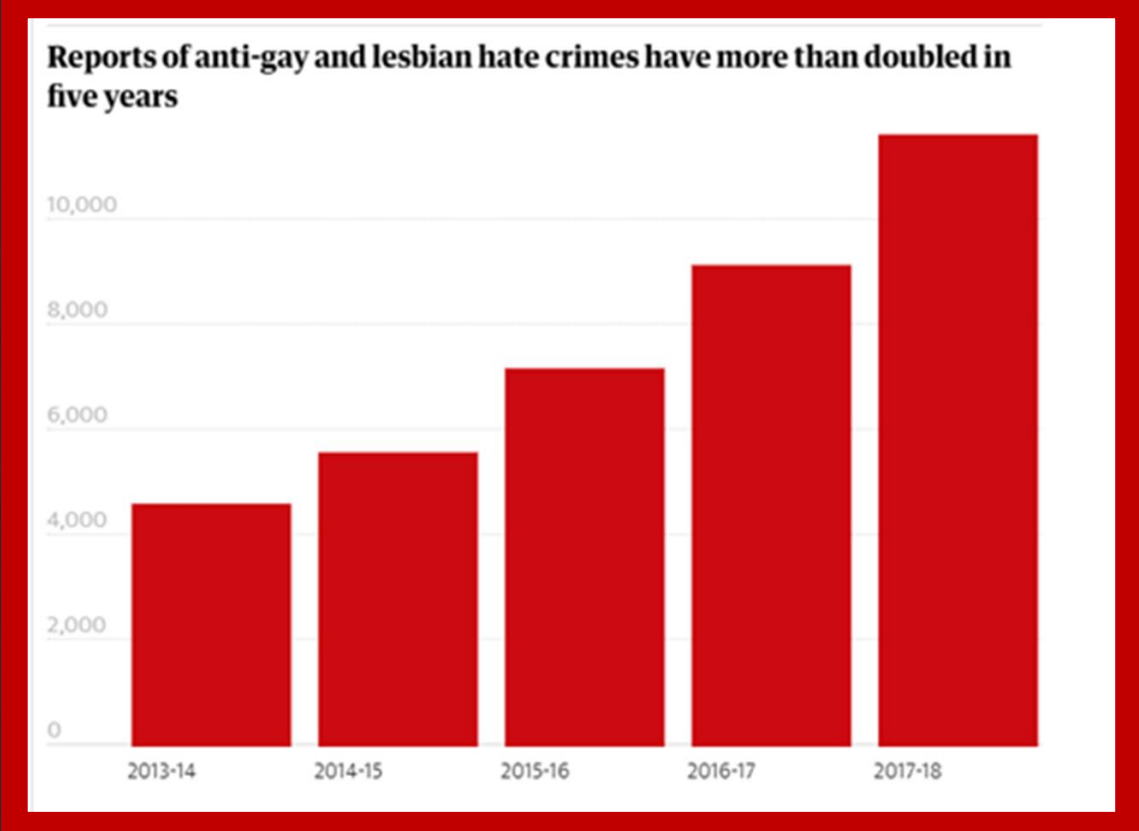
Hate crimes arguably are aimed at stigmatised minorities in society by those who have more power and privilege to uphold the dominant ideologies in modern society. For example, a person may attack someone who is gay due to beliefs that the heterosexual norms of society are the correct beliefs. ‘Usually directed towards already stigmatised and marginalised groups. As such, it is a mechanism of power and oppression, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterise a given social order’. (Carr et al. 2017)

According to Equality and Human Rights Commission research summary 38 ‘In order to avoid victimisation, some people try to avoid being identified as ‘gay’. (Stonewall 2009). Gay people are forced to hide their true identities out of fear of being attacked or given negative attention. In relation to Goffman the gay identity can be classed as an attribution that is ‘discreditable’ and therefore carries a negative stigma which is why a person may choose to hide that specific part of their life from others to avoid negative stigmatisation. ‘In social situations with an individual known or perceived to have a stigma, we are likely, then to employ categorizations that do not fit. And we and he are likely to experience uneasiness...And since the stigmatized person is likely to be more often faced with these situations than are we, he is likely to become the more adapt at managing them’. (Goffman, 1963). The fears of coming out for a gay person can cause them to hide their sexuality and remain ‘in the closet’ most of the fears regarded the reactions other members in society would have. A blog specifically for coming out listed pros and cons of doing such entailing; fears of rejection, harassment, becoming homeless and physical violence’. (Lydon 2017). One man who is choosing to hide his sexuality reported ‘It’s still the fear of losing loved friends and family that stops me from coming out’. (Lydon 2017). Hiding sexuality out of fear of others responses can be explained further by Goffman who states, ‘Stigma is a process by which the reactions of others, spoils normal identity’. (Goffman, 1963). A person having to hide their sexuality and suppress their true identity can cause severe emotional and mental harm.

GAY HATE CRIME



(BBC 2015)



(BBC 2018)

Homophobic hate crime is regarded as the most violent form of hate crime (Perry 2001). This can arguably be justified due to the use of homophobic language that is embedded into colloquial everyday conversation. Terms such as ‘gay’ and ‘fag’ are used to negatively describe objects and people in society. A recent school report across British schools recounted that ‘99 per cent of gay young people say that they hear phrases such as ‘that’s so gay’ and ‘you’re so gay’ in school and 96 per cent hear homophobic remarks such as ‘poof’ and ‘lezza’.’ Homophobic language is used unconsciously in conversation and thus can be justified as ‘banter’ or harmless language. ‘Almost half of secondary school teachers and a quarter of primary school teachers think that the homophobic language they hear is ‘just harmless banter’. (Kibirige 2016).



(Stonewall 2015)



(BBC 2019)

1. Michael Boothe, 49 – beaten to death
2. Andrew Collier, 33 – strangled to death
3. Emanuel Spiteri, 41 – strangled to death
4. Robyn Brown, 23 – stabbed to death
5. Jaap Bornkamp , 52– stabbed to death
6. Geoffrey Windsor, 57 – beaten to death

7. Damilola Taylor , 10– stabbed to death
8. Michael Causer, 23 – kicked to death
9. Gerry Edwards , 59– stabbed to death
10. Ian Baynham, 62 – beaten to death
11. Steven Simpson, 18 – set on fire

Members of the LGBTQ community have to be cautious in regards to what parts of the world they can travel to compared to heterosexual people. Going to a destination that is not accepting can lead to imprisonment. Violent attacks and death. The Gov.uk website contains a page for this matter only. ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender foreign travel advice: Advice for LGB&T tourists travelling abroad.’ Some of the advice recommended:

- In some countries, you may be more likely to experience difficulties in rural areas so it’s best to exercise more discretion.
- If you receive unwelcome attention or unwelcome remarks about your sexuality or gender identity, it’s usually best to ignore them and move to a safe place. (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender Foreign Travel Advice 2013)

This is a clear example of the inequality and the restrictions a homosexual couple or individual faces due to gay hate crime. Simply planning a holiday to a desired location is a privilege straight people have.

Black and Asian people are more likely to be victims of homophobic hate crime compared to white people. ‘A third of black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT people (34 per cent) have experienced a hate crime or incident based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the last year, compared to one in five white LGBT people (20 per cent).’ (LGBT In Britain Hate Crime 2020). Regarding intersectionality an individual who is black and gay for example will experience negative reactions to their sexuality as well as their race. This is debatably due to homosexuality being seen as severely deviant within black and Asian communities. ‘In an intragroup (within-race) analysis, Black heterosexuality becomes normative while Black homosexuality remains deviant... Collins argues that Black homosexuality is perceived as deviant because of the total absence of heterosexuality’. (Moore, 2012)

In closing, gay hate crimes are increasing in society at an alarming rate whether the countries they take place in are liberal or accepting, they are still unavoidable for a number of people in society. I have been able to conclude that homophobic hate crimes cause harm and dissociation for gay people not just from direct attacks but also out of fear of being attacked or receiving negative attention. The work of Goffman and the ideology of stigma develops the concept of those in society that choose to hide their sexuality as they are ‘discreditable’ trying to hide a ‘discreditable’ part of one’s personality causes emotional harm and produces individuals who can only live a fake identity. The way in which society; especially the education, system allows homophobic language as banter only plays into the culture of homophobic hate crimes that are taught and imbedded at a young age. It essentially leads to statistics such as: ‘Four in five anti-LGBT hate crimes and incidents go unreported, with younger LGBT people particularly reluctant to go to the police.’ (Stone wall 2019). If homophobic language is taught to be acceptable whilst an individual is in education, they will have this ideology of accepting negative language later on in life.

I chose to present a poster on homophobia and gay hate crime due to recent studies, that have recorded an increase in homophobic violence in the last 5 years. (Marsh et al. 2019). I selected the graph to be present on the poster as it clearly shows the surge of homophobia in the UK through the past 5 years. I wanted to investigate the way in which negative language that is connected to the LGBTQ community can be used in everyday language yet still feed into a culture of prejudice against those who identify as gay. For example, a person may use the common phrase of 'that's so gay' harmlessly not realising the hurt it can cause a person. Yet I also believe by tackling homophobia that seems harmless or minor can help to stop and decrease the amount or violent and fatal homophobic attacks that happen globally. The picture of the phrase 'that's so gay' I was able to find through the stone wall charity where I gathered information on the way negative undertones of the word gay cause harm and distress. I chose to firstly define hate crimes before stating that homophobic hate crimes are the most violent. I chose to start with a fact that may shock individuals. I then followed this by talking about the use of homophobic language as the acceptance of homophobic language in society is arguably a knock-on effect for the LGBTQ community as it feeds into a culture of hate and negative stigma, it essentially leads to violent attacks.

I concentrated on attacks and cases that have happened in the UK, with a high focus on London specifically as London is perceived to be a LGBTQ friendly space that is safe and accepting. London is often boastful of its 'diversity' and uses this to advertise and attract large numbers of people, with bars, clubs and one of the largest gay prides. (Iqbal 2019). However, after my research I have uncovered the reality that gay people face in every day life compared to a straight person. The amount of homophobic hate crimes that have been reported or shared that have taken place in London make it difficult to consider its diverse title as true.

Straight privilege is a topic I wanted to address in the poster as I believe a lot of ignorance towards the struggle that gay individuals face is not understood. Straight privilege is a freedom that the LGBTQ community simply do not have and that others take for granted. I chose to include the difficulties a gay person may face when abroad as it shows a clear disadvantage to attitudes against the LGBTQ community. I was able to find a list of straight privileges that I could not include in my poster as there was simply too many and I could not justify one's importance over another. However, the first 3 of the list stated:

1. Receiving public recognition and support for an intimate relationship (e.g., congratulations for an engagement).
2. Expressing affection in most social situations and not expecting hostile or violent reactions from others.
3. Living with your partner openly.

Whilst creating my poster and researching I chose to focus on a quote by C. Wright Mills in order to allow myself to broaden my thought process as well as to try to understand how my own straight privilege may unconsciously disregard information that I simply may not consider.

"People with advantages are loathe to believe that they just happen to be people with advantages They come readily to define themselves as inherently worthy of what they possess; they come to believe themselves 'naturally' elite; and, in fact, to imagine their possessions and their privileges as natural extensions of their own elite selves." (Mills, 2000)

This argument allowed me to explore the way homophobic individuals see themselves and the heteronormative lifestyle as the correct way, and therefore it is what empowers them to believe they're elite and those who are gay as powerless, deviant individuals.

I chose to use the photograph of Melania Geymonat and her girlfriend Christine Hannigan after the attack they both encountered on the bus as it was one of the most viral photographs of 2019. It was a photo that shocked many in the public due to the attack being in London. However, the attack was able to show the impact homophobia has and the violence it can carry.

I opted on giving a list of names of individuals who had been murdered due to homophobia next to the phrase 'that's so gay' and next to the picture of the bus attack to reinforce the reality of what homophobia produces and what it means for specific individuals. I chose to present the list with the name of the victims, their age and the way in which they were murdered as I believe it is effective in shocking people with the age range and the violent ways in which each individual had their life taken.

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